

# THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT



### A NURSE'S CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS is a joyous time to most nurses, a sad or lonely time to a few, it should be a blessed time to all. The nurse who is detained on a case which she can not leave, while her heart is longing for home; the nurse who has no home to go to, and who tries to arrange her time so that she will be on duty, or who spends the holiday in her room at her boarding place alone; and the nurse to whom the day is a sad anniversary of death or loss; these are inclined to find an undercurrent of sadness aggravated by the merriment of others.

The way to best celebrate Christmas is to begin during the Advent season to carry out the thought of the Advent collect: "to cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light," to put aside all unworthy thoughts and all self-pity and to fill the heart instead with love for one's fellow-men in preparation for the coming of the Christ-child. When this is done, the days preceding Christmas will naturally be full of thoughts and plans and desires for making others happy on that day, and it will be such an absorbing occupation, bringing such a glow of pleasure within, as will cast a radiance over the sad Christmas or the lonely Christmas, making them beautiful, if not gay.

No one need have money at her command in order to pass the day happily, though there is never a time of year when one is so thankful for a little fund to draw from. It is not the gift itself, but the loving thought, which counts with everyone, high or low, and an element of surprise is always delightful. There are many tiny gifts which can be made from simple materials if one has the time and is willing to take pains and thought, and there are many people about us to remember, beside our friends, if we keep our eyes open. We once knew an old man

who did odd tasks about an apartment building who was treated to a Christmas dinner by a woman whose means were limited. She had bought two warm undershirts for him and had tied them up in a gay package with a sprig of holly on top, putting it at his plate on the kitchen table. When this rough, homeless man saw the waiting place, he broke down and cried, for it showed that some one really cared to have him happy. Probably a gift of money, could the woman have afforded it, would not have touched him so much. One such celebration, thought out and carried through, is enough to make the donor as well as the recipient happy, and possibly, the merrier. A retired nurse, who lived alone, and who had no immediate relatives, used to go year after year with a ready-cooked Christmas dinner, to visit an old lady who was a patient in an institution; it would have been hard to tell which enjoyed the celebration most. It is pleasant to think up those who will have little or no jollity without your help and try to make the day brighter for them.

A nurse who has been sent to a case shortly before Christmas will often find her patient discouraged at the impossibility of carrying through her own holiday plans. Here is the best sort of an opportunity for the nurse to show her true Christmas spirit, to put her own preparations in the background and to throw herself with unfeigned interest and enthusiasm into the family interests, so that no child need be disappointed and her patient need not feel left out.

Even the nurse in the boarding house can find some other forlorn nurse to cheer and the two together can plan some surprise for the queer person who rooms below them, or for the over-worked landlady or the busy cook. The nurses off duty can attend the Christmas service, while the nurse on duty can only think the carols or sing them softly (quite off the key perhaps) to the baby in her arms, if she is so fortunate as to be helping to celebrate a new nativity. And in this last case, is there so much fun in the world as hanging up a tiny baby's sock for its first Christmas?

We have not forgotten the hospital nurses, each one of them has her hands full to overflowing, seeing to it that each patient under her care has a bit of Christmas brightness provided by herself. The kind superintendent and her assistant will watch to see which of her flock of nurses, perhaps the newest probationer, is inclined to greet the day in tears and will set her right by some special kindness or by sending her to perform one.

Let us hope that the coming Christmas day will be full of the highest joy to all of the JOURNAL readers and to all of the nurses of our land.



## CHRISTMAS GIFTS

WE sometimes see suggestions in regard to the choosing of suitable gifts which we should like to exactly reverse. For instance, we are asked to choose books for the student and ornaments for the frivolous, yet one who is well acquainted with the human heart knows that the student often has an inward longing for something pretty to wear, while the frivolous, who already abounds in trifles, may like the worthy book. Nine people out of ten select warm gloves for an old lady and a box of candy for her grandchild, but the chances are that the grandmother would secretly be much more delighted with the candy and the child would be proud of new gloves.

A knife is supposed to be *the* gift for a boy, yet every girl has need of a knife and would not mind possessing several.

Above all things, do not give to an invalid or elderly person one of the illustrated books called "Waiting by the River," or some equally cheering subject. There are hundreds of such to be seen in every bookstore and they are not appreciated by those for whom they are so blandly prepared. Every normal human being should have a healthy interest in life as long as it lasts and it is not conducive to good cheer to invite him to concentrate his attention on his mortality.

A good general principle to follow in gift making is that if you do not enjoy a thing yourself, probably no one else will. Do not pass on to your humble friend a possession for which you have no use, better send a sincere, loving Christmas letter to the friend and bestow the impossible picture or book on the Salvation Army, leaving it to find a recipient.

If you have no Christmas fund for gifts, and must part with some of your own things, select those that you really like, and which you feel a little twinge in giving up, such a gift will undoubtedly carry pleasure with it.

We commend for before-Christmas reading a story of Mrs. Ewing's called "Madame Liberality," which describes a child so ingenious in her art of gift making that when her brothers saw her hard at work they would call out, "There you are again, making presents out of nothing and half a yard of ribbon." That is an art worth cultivating.

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OCCUPATIONS FOR INVALIDS

MISS TRACY's paper, which we give as the leading article in this number, is one of the most suggestive that we have published in a long time. It is another one of those evidences that the true nurse must

possess something more than a rule of thumb in nursing her patient's body.

We wonder where the demands upon her are going to cease, and we think that in all of the new lines of work that are opening up that may be classed under the head of social service that the spirit of womanliness and helpfulness must be the foundation upon which the nurse's education is based.

If training schools would pay more attention to the development of the spirit of helpfulness and less to the exacting technique of the operating-room, we would have less criticism of nurses as a class in the outside world. The mental equipment of a nurse is just as important for the good of her patients, both in the hospital and out, as her manual dexterity, yet in many training schools this is entirely neglected.

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#### PLANS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON TUBERCULOSIS

IN the official pages will be found the report of the commission on arrangements for the International Congress on Tuberculosis to be held in Washington, District of Columbia, from September 21 to October 12, 1908.

The educational importance to nurses of this congress can not be estimated. So important a part of the practical application of the scientific researches in regard to tuberculosis seems to be falling into the hands of trained nurses for administration that the profession at large needs to be kept very closely in touch with what the advanced thinkers and scientists are doing along these lines and as far as possible to participate in such congresses, at least by attending them.

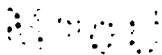
We shall publish from time to time during the year further reports of the committee, and we hope to be able to show in what special way this convention in 1908 will have a direct bearing upon the nursing situation.

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#### REPRINTS OF DR. POTTER'S PAPERS

WE have at our disposal two hundred reprints of the articles entitled "Venereal Prophylaxis" which appeared in the February and March numbers of the JOURNAL, which are for sale at fifteen cents a copy.

These papers of Dr. Potter's should have wide distribution among women's clubs, teachers, settlement workers, etc. They will be especially valuable to the committee on Public Health of the Associated Alumnae,



and will be sent from the editorial office in Rochester upon receipt of fifteen cents in postage stamps for a single copy, or at the same rate for larger numbers.

So far as we have followed the literature being circulated from different points on the subject of the contagiousness of venereal diseases, we have not found anything that goes into the matter so in detail, that gives the symptoms of different forms of contagion, or that points out so clearly the dangers to the innocent as these articles by Dr. Potter. They are written simply, and are perfectly comprehensible to unprofessional people and we would like to see them broadly circulated. If the demand justifies it, Dr. Potter will publish another edition of these papers with a new chapter on special instruction to mothers.

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#### CONDITIONS IN HIGH GRADE TRAINING SCHOOLS WHERE REGISTRATION LAWS ARE IN FORCE

IN all the hue and cry that is going on over the country in regard to the shortage of probationers in our hospitals, it has come to our notice that at least a few of the high grade schools that have adopted an eight hour system and that have reorganized their schools in late years on a strictly educational basis are not suffering any embarrassment in securing an abundance of good material for their training schools.

This is the strongest argument that can be made to those hospitals that are crying out that they cannot secure nurses for their work but are still continuing to conduct their schools with a three years' course under the same conditions as the two year course, with long hours, a burden of domestic drudgery, haphazard lectures, and an ever-increasing discipline which deprives the pupil in training of practically all personal liberty.

In spite of the fact that economic conditions have so changed in the business world, we believe that if an eight hour system were to be universally adopted, and the conditions for the three years course made what they should be, that most of the hospitals would be relieved of this embarrassment. It is becoming a question whether we should not have a united effort throughout all the states for securing an eight hour day through legislation.

#### THE VALUE OF PROPER ADVERTISING

WE understand that all of the colleges and medical schools are feeling the commercial prosperity of the country in a falling off of students in practically the same way that training schools are doing, with this

difference that the universities are not proposing to lower their standards of education to induce greater numbers of students to enter their profession, but are circularizing the preparatory schools and high schools of the country most vigorously. Some of these professional schools are going so far, we are told, as to send out agents to drum up students.

We think possibly the time has come when training schools for nurses will be obliged to adopt the methods of other educational institutions and not only advertise in magazines, but profit by circularizing the senior classes of high schools and young ladies' boarding schools. Mrs. Fick's account of her talk before a girls' club of a high school contains a very valuable suggestion along these lines.

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#### JOURNAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

ALUMNÆ Associations holding stock in the JOURNAL Company are reminded that the annual meeting will be on January 16, 1908, in New York, and that where a representative cannot be present arrangements should be made for representation by proxy, that is, some one who will be present is properly authorized to cast the vote for the association or absent member. Fuller instructions will be given in the January JOURNAL.

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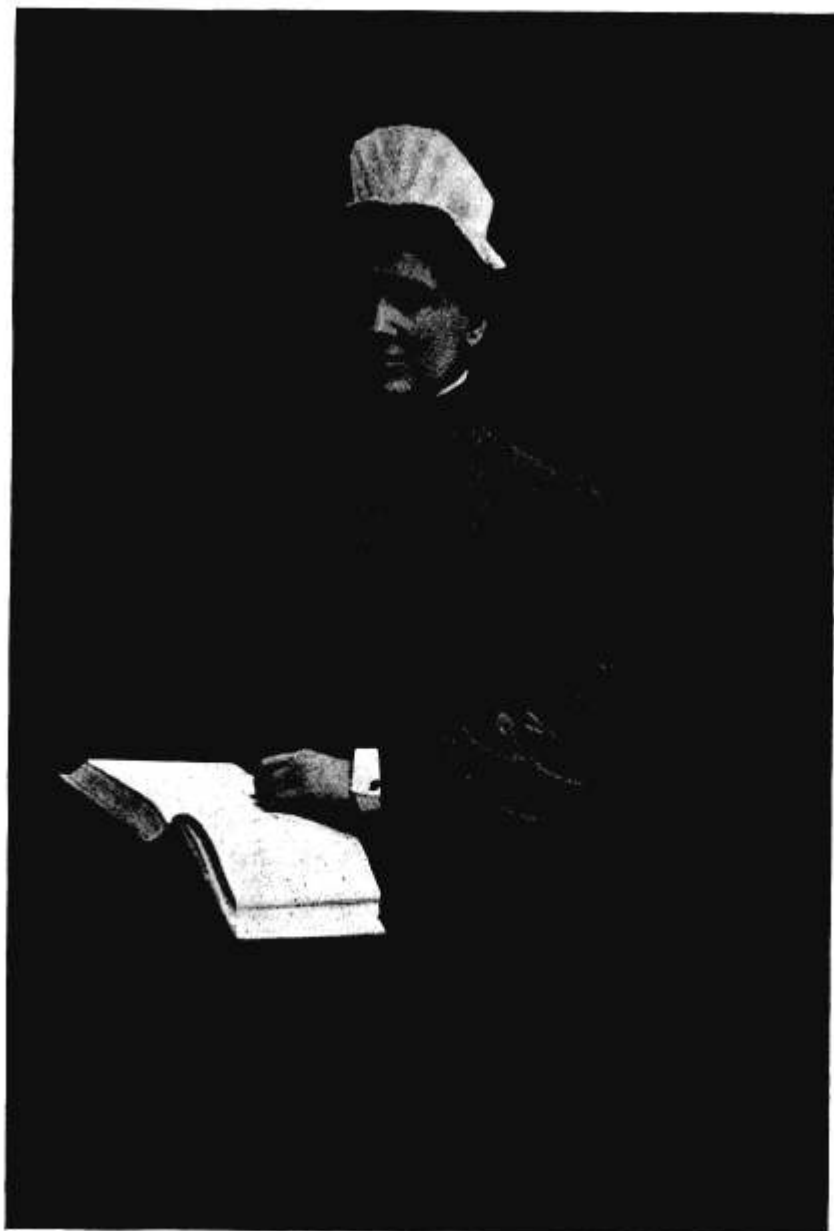
#### NEW YORK STATE EXAMINATIONS

NURSES who intend to come up for the Regents' Examination in January should make application early for instruction, to the Education Department, Albany, New York.

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#### MARY S. GILMOUR, R. N.

HER colleagues among the superintendents of training schools, and the members of the nursing profession generally, will learn with deep regret that Miss Mary S. Gilmour has felt obliged, for the sake of her health, to resign her position as superintendent of the New York City Training School. She had decided to take this step more than a year ago, but was deterred by the illness of one of her officers, which made her unwilling to leave the school short-handed. Her record is a brilliant one. She graduated from the New York City school in 1890, and returned to it, after six years spent in private nursing, to be the supervising nurse of the maternity hospital. In a little more than a year she was made an assistant superintendent of the school, and on May 1st, 1898, she was installed as superintendent. In 1899 she became a member



MISS MARY S. GILMOUR, R.N.,  
Superintendent New York City Training School, Blackwell's Island, N. Y.

of the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses, and she has served on several of its committees. She also joined the New York State Nurses' Association during its first year, and in 1905, at the request of the Chairman of the Committee on Education, did important work in helping to arrange a curriculum of uniform studies for all training schools throughout the state. As her school thrived and outgrew its quarters, two new buildings were added to the Nurses' Home, and the old central building was considerably enlarged. This meant nearly two years of great strain and discomfort to Miss Gilmour, which she bore admirably at the time, but from the fatigue of which she has never fully recovered. Her talents as a teacher and an organizer, both of a high order, have been used unsparingly for the benefit of the school, but she now feels that rest and change of scene are necessary for a time. It is hoped, however, that her absence may be only temporary, and that she may return refreshed in body and mind to go on with the work which she has done so well.



“ All things are Thine: no gifts have we,  
Lord of all gifts, to offer Thee;  
And hence with grateful hearts to-day  
Thy own before Thy feet we lay.”

WHITTIER.